GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
PANCHAYATI RAJ
LOK SABHA

STARRED QUESTION NO:399
ANSWERED ON:21.04.2005
INVOLVEMENT OF WOMEN AT PANCHAYAT LEVEL IN ENVIRONMENT PRESERVATION
Satpathy Shri Tathagata;Verma Shri Ravi Prakash

Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

(a) Whether the Govt. has prepared any policy measures and directives for the full- fledged involvement of women in environment preservation at village panchayat level;

(b) ifso/ the details in this regard; and

(c) the steps taken or proposed to be taken by the Government to encourage women to protect the environment at Panchayat level ?

Answer

MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ .(SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR)

(a), (b) & (c) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN FARTS (a)f (b) AND (c) OF LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NQ.399 DUE FOR REPLY ON 21.04.2005 REGARDING INVOLVEMENT OF WOMEN AT PANCHAYAT LEVEL IN ENVIRONMENT PRESERVATION

(a) & (b) The Constitution of India stipulates the following provisions relating to the environment:

Article 48A

`Protection and improvement of environment and safeguarding of forests and wild life. The State shall endeavour to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests and wild life of the country.`

Part - IV A(g) - Fundamental Duties Article 51 A

`It shall be the duty of every citizen of India to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wild life and to have compassion for living creatures.In the National Policy for the Empowerment of Women (2001) under the sub-head `Environment`, it has been provided as under :

`6.10 Women will be involved and their perspectives reflected in the policies and programmes for environment, conservation and restoration. Considering the impact of environmental factors on their livelihoods, women`s participation will be ensured in the conservation of the environment and control of environmental degradation. Tlie vast majority of rural women still depends on tlie locally available non-commercial sources of energy such as animal dung, crop waste and fuel wood. In order to ensure the efficient use of these energy resources in an environmental friendly manner, the Policy will aim at promoting the programmes of non-conventional energy resources. Women will be involved in spreading the use of solar energy, biogas, smokeless chulhas and other rural application so as to have a visible impact of these measures in influencing eco system and in changing the life styles of ruralwomen.`

(c) The three levels of Panchayats at the District, Intermediate and Village level have, at present 21,86,452 elected representatives out of which 12,87,838 are male and 890605 are female representatives. Article 243G of the Constitution relates to powers, authority and responsibilities of Panchayats. This provision is as under :

`Subject to the provisions of this Constitution, the Legislature of a State may, by law, endow the Panchayats with such powers and authority and may be necessary to enable them to function as institutions of self-gqvernment and such law may contain provisions for the devolution of powers and responsibilities upon Panchayats, at the appropriate level, subject to such conditions as may be specified therein, with respect to -

(a) the preparation of plans for economic development and social justice;

(b) the implementation of schemes for economic development and social justice as may be entrusted to them including those in relation to the matters listed as the Eleventh Schedule.

As per the Eleventh Schedule, the following subjects have a significant impact on environmental reservation :

1. Agriculture, including Agricultural Extension;

2. Land Improvement, Implementation of Land Reforms,Land Consolidation and Soil Conservation.

3. Minor Irrigation, Water Management and Watershed Development.

4. Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Poultry.

5. Fisheries.

6. Social Forestry and Farm Forestry.

7. Minor- Forest Produce.

8. Drinking Water.

9. Non-Conventional Energy Sources.

The Eleventh Schedule also lists out Women and Child Development as a subject that may be transferred to Panchayats.

A Task Force on Devolution of Powers constituted by the then Ministry of Rural Development has prepared an Activity Mapping framework which elaborates the activities relating to above subjects that may be assigned to the three levels of Panchayats. In the Second Round Table of State Ministers of Panchayati Raj held at Mysore in August, 2004, States have agreed, through consensus, that they will undertake Activity Mapping to the three levels of Panchayats, which would also include the assigning of activities to Panchayats on environmental and women`s issues.

The Biological Diversity Act, 2002 has been enacted to provide for conservation of biological diversity, sustainable use of its components and fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the use of biological resources, knowledge and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto. The Act provides that every local body which includes Panchayats shall constitute a Biodiversity Management Committee within its areas for the purpose of promoting conservation, sustainable use and documentation of biological diversity including preservation of habitats, conservation of land races, folk varieties and cultivars,domesticated stocks and breeds of animals and microorganisms and chronicling of knowledge relating to biological diversity. As per the Biological Diversity Rules 2004, framed under the Act, every local body shall constitute a Biodiversity Management Committee within its area of jurisdiction. The Biodiversity Management Committee shall consist of a Chairperson and not more than six persons nominated by the local body, of whom not less than one third should be women and not less than 18 percent should belong to the Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe. The peoples biodiversity registers shall be maintained and validated by the Management Committee.